



Stakeholder Engagement & Data Use

Helping Stakeholders Get the Most from an SLDS

This publication addresses the roles stakeholder engagement and data use play in creating a statewide longitudinal data system (SLDS) that is responsive to users' needs and well utilized. Included in this document are state examples and State Support Team (SST) tips on how to effectively use stakeholder engagement to establish and sustain widespread, effective data use. This brief is part of a series of products focusing on the relationships among stakeholder engagement, data use, and sustainability. The content for this brief originated from an SST workshop held in Phoenix, Arizona, in May 2013.

Overview of Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholders—individuals or groups directly or indirectly affected by an SLDS—should be engaged throughout the process of planning, designing, implementing, using, and sustaining the SLDS. It is essential that states develop a strategic approach to stakeholder engagement. The SST has developed a six-step plan to develop effective stakeholder engagement.

Six-Step Plan to Develop Effective Stakeholder Engagement

1. State Desired Outcomes
2. Determine Purpose
3. Build a Plan
4. Implement the Plan
5. Monitor and Adjust the Plan
6. Reach Desired Outcomes

It is important to note that seeking leadership buy-in throughout the plan is essential to successful stakeholder engagement.

For more information regarding stakeholder engagement, please see the resources *Stakeholder Engagement Toolkit: Traversing 'Stakeholder Land'* and *Sustainability Planning Guide*.

Data Use Framework

For an SLDS to be successful, the data from it must be used regularly to inform decisions and actions in support of the state's, agency's, or stakeholders' overarching goals. The Data Use Framework (see Figure 1, next page) is a generalizable strategy that includes all the critical issues a state must address to ensure widespread, effective data use. It is composed of three main phases: Plan, Create, and Support.

- The Plan phase focuses on establishing a clear mission and goals for the initiative, and in support of that mission and goals, identifying the top priority users and uses the system will serve.
- The Create phase focuses on engaging stakeholders to identify the products or resources they need from the system to support the uses identified in the planning phase. It also includes a delivery and dissemination strategy.
- The Support phase focuses on ensuring users know how to use the system, understand the data provided to them, and know how to use it to inform their work. It also addresses resource planning and keeping the SLDS relevant to changing needs.

For more information regarding data use, please see the resource *Developing a Data Use Strategy*.

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Workshop Presenters:

Robin Taylor
SLDS Grant Program, State Support Team

Corey Chatis
SLDS Grant Program, State Support Team

Kerry Thomas and James Weidamaier
Alaska

Connie Brooks and Jay Pennington
Iowa

Virginia Clifford and Irene Koffink
New Hampshire

For more information on the IES SLDS Grant Program, additional SLDS publications, or for support with system development or use, please visit <http://nces.ed.gov/programs/SLDS>.



Figure 1. Data Use Framework

The Relationship Between Data Use and Stakeholder Engagement

Actively involving those whom the SLDS is intended to serve is essential to ensure widespread, effective data use. While stakeholder engagement is explicitly called out as part of the Create phase, it should be a foundational part of all three phases of the Data Use Framework. When stakeholders are actively engaged in the planning, creation, and support of the SLDS, buy-in and sustainability are increased; common goals among diverse interest groups are established; communications are increased and improved; and the system is built with its users' needs at the center. The following are best practices suggestions for and state examples of engaging stakeholders throughout the planning, creation, and support of an SLDS.

The Plan Phase

The Plan phase of the Data Use Framework poses the following questions:

- What is the point of the SLDS effort?
- Whom are we intending to serve?
- What types of decisions and/or actions will the system inform?

Suggested actions for states to consider when engaging stakeholders to plan for data use include:

- Engage stakeholders (with a focus on executive leadership) in defining the vision and key goals of the effort.
- Establish a plan for communicating the vision and goals of the effort to each key stakeholder group.
- Prioritize key user roles based on those who have the most direct impact on the vision and goals of the effort.
- Involve representatives from these key user roles to identify the types of processes they lead and decisions they currently make that could be informed by data from the SLDS.

Plan Phase: State Examples

Iowa

Iowa has regular and ongoing engagement with its Steering Committee, which provides overall direction to the project, and its Advisory Committee, which provides input and feedback about specific topics, including reports and security. Before engaging in IT work to build their K12 data warehouse, the SLDS team traveled across state and conducted 10 focus groups within 10 days, talking to 180 people. The structured focus groups created a protocol for questions to ask in the future. They used stakeholders' input to create documents detailing user roles and what the different stakeholders wanted from the system.

SST Tip: Define a clear and manageable scope for stakeholder engagement.

A common challenge is receiving a high volume of requests and feedback from stakeholders, much of which may not be realistic or possible to address. It is important to listen, but be ready to set realistic boundaries with stakeholders. It is harmful to stakeholder relationships to respond to requests with silence.

Alaska

Alaska initiated its P-20W project by collaboratively working with K12 through the State Education Authority (SEA), public postsecondary education, and labor and workforce development. The goals of the stakeholder engagement effort are to increase awareness of the project, generate shared interest in developing Alaska's education data analysis capacity, and identify stakeholders' information needs. To ensure each sector is appropriately represented, partner agencies have helped to identify and engage stakeholder groups who, in turn, have helped validate policy questions and solicit feedback. Alaska also created a specific communications plan for different stakeholder groups.

New Hampshire

At the beginning of its SLDS project, New Hampshire created a tailored stakeholder engagement approach for each project outcome. SLDS leaders work to select stakeholders with relevant backgrounds and interests who can offer meaningful feedback. New Hampshire's Steering Committee has an assigned business leadership role and technical role for each outcome/stakeholder area to help coordinate the effort. For its college and career readiness objective, the state established a stakeholder group of principals and guidance counselors from seven schools to inform the early warning system.

The Create Phase

The Create phase of the Data Use Framework poses the following questions:

- How do we involve those whom we intend to serve?
- What types of products/resources will the system produce?
- How will we deliver data to key users?

Suggested actions for states to consider when engaging stakeholders to create data resources include:

- Create products in response to users' needs before building the entire SLDS to demonstrate its potential and value.
- Communicate to stakeholders how you have used their input from the planning phase to create products aligned with their needs.
- Release preliminary products in a draft or pilot phase to garner stakeholder feedback and improve them before disseminating statewide.
- Ensure that you time the initial rollout of data resources so they are available to users when they need them to inform their decisions.

Create Phase: State Examples

Kentucky

At the beginning of its SLDS effort, Kentucky identified stakeholders and their top priority needs, and then quickly created products for these users before deploying the SLDS. This made the system's benefits tangible to stakeholders and increased their buy-in.

SST Tip: Save stakeholders time by leveraging existing groups.

Do not assume you have to create all new stakeholder groups. Identify existing groups that consist of the user roles you want to engage, and see if you can get on their agendas.

Texas

Texas led an extensive stakeholder engagement effort consisting of numerous focus groups of local educators across the state to understand the types of data that were important to them, and the type of functionality they needed. This engagement informed principal and teacher dashboards that are used in not only Texas, but have been adopted by several other states.

Mississippi

Mississippi engaged with local education agency (LEA) administrators to identify and provide data into the P-20W portal. The portal in turn provides these administrators with information about what happens to their students after they leave K12.

The Support Phase

The Support phase of the Data Use Framework poses the following questions:

- How will users know how to use the system?
- How will users understand the data provided by the system?
- How will users know what to do with the data provided by the system?

Suggested actions for states to consider when engaging stakeholders to support ongoing data use include:

- Conduct a needs assessment of top priority user groups to understand what skills and knowledge they need to use the SLDS and the data within it to inform their work. Design user supports to address the most common needs.
- Create a multi-pronged training plan that includes in-person sessions, webinars, and online recordings. Have all user documentation vetted by end users to guarantee it is understandable and covers key issues.
- Establish long-term feedback mechanisms for key user groups to ensure the SLDS remains relevant to their changing needs.
- When preparing for a budget request to support the SLDS, work with legislators to help them understand what is required to sustain the SLDS, as well as who the SLDS serves—and for what purposes.

Support Phase: State Examples

Oregon

Oregon has worked extensively with teachers to identify what information they need in the classroom to make real-time decisions. They have created a multi-pronged professional development program on data use that leverages teachers as peer trainers.

Georgia

Georgia has a team of eight state employees who offer web-based training for stakeholders, which drives local use of the system. The SLDS is embedded within each LEA's student information system so teachers do not have to learn a "new" system. Georgia reaches stakeholders through media outreach, including a Twitter feed and video campaigns in which teachers discuss how the Georgia Tunnel helps them in the classroom.

Hawaii

Hawaii works directly with schools and teachers to provide in-person training on the SLDS and the reports that result from the SLDS. SLDS teams work with teachers to address the questions that arise from these reports, and they are constantly revising the reports they generate based on users' feedback.

Additional Resources

Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder Engagement Toolkit: Traversing 'Stakeholder Land'

http://nces.ed.gov/programs/slds/pdf/target_team_stakeholderland.pdf

Sustainability Planning Guide

http://nces.ed.gov/programs/slds/pdf/sustainability_guide.pdf

Data Use

Developing a Data Use Strategy

http://nces.ed.gov/programs/slds/pdf/data_use_strategy.pdf

Data Use Self Assessment and Action Plan

Available in the Public Domain Clearinghouse in GRADS360: <https://grads360.org>

Innovative & Effective Utilization of Early Childhood Data: SLDS Webinar Summary

http://nces.ed.gov/programs/slds/pdf/webinar_id-mgmt.pdf

State Examples

Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education, ANSWERS

<http://acpe.alaska.gov/ANSWERS>

Georgia Department of Education, SLDS

<http://slds.doe.k12.ga.us/Pages/SLDS.aspx>

Hawaii Data eXchange Partnership

<http://www.p20hawaii.org/programs/hawaiidxp/>

Iowa Department of Education, State Longitudinal Data System

http://educateiowa.gov/index.php?option=com_content&id=2030

Kentucky Center for Education and Workforce Statistics

<http://kentuckyp20.ky.gov/>

Mississippi Department of Education, SLDS Grants

<http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/slds-grants>

New Hampshire Department of Education

<http://www.education.nh.gov/>

Oregon Department of Education, Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems

<http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/results/?id=381>

SLDS Spotlight: Oregon's Direct Access to Achievement (DATA) Project

http://nces.ed.gov/programs/slds/pdf/OR_spotlight.pdf

Texas Student Data System

<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/tsds2/>